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ABSTRACT

This handbook provides a collection of stimulation activities that encourage a child's physical and mental growth from birth to five years of age. Emphasis is placed on making stimulation aids that are inexpensive or can be made from scrap materials. Advice is given about ways to carry out designated activities. All activities have been tried and tested over a 2-year period in collaboration with the Jamaican National Day Care Program. Activities are categorized under the headings infancy, cognitive, gross motor, and fine motor. (RH)

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STIMULATION ACTIVITIES

AGE BIRTH TO FIVE YEARS

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STIMULATION ACTIVITIES

AGE BIRTH TO FIVE YEARS

by
Dave Bloomgarden

Designed & Illustrated by
Carl R. Ballinger

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August 1983

Stimulation Activities

Age Birth to Five Years

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Introduction

This handbook is a collection of stimulation activities-activities that encourage a child's physical and mental growth from birth to five years old. Emphasis is placed on making stimulation aids that are low in cost or can be made from scrap materials, and advice is given on how to carry out designated activities. All activities listed have been tried and tested over a two-year period in working with the Jamaican National Day Care Program.

The range of activities presented is not meant to be complete, but it is a guide to the types of activities that can be carried out with pre-schoolers. Your own creativity and motivation will suggest many additional activities and stimulation aids. The complete range of activities is only limited by the extent of your own imagination.

Activities by Corresponding Age

Age Birth to One

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(FM)	Printing shapes	66

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Guidelines

Activities with children should be carried out in a manner that encourages a child's confidence in his own abilities and desire to explore the world around him. This means that a child should receive praise for his successes no- matter how small. All activities should be carried out within important ingredient for a child's healthy development.

Stimulation activities in this handbook have been divided into three broad areas of development- Cognitive, Gross Motor, Fine Motor.

1) Cognitive- refers to a child's ability to reason, remember, and use language.
2) Gross Motor- refers to the use of large muscle groups such as that used in running a race.
3) Fine Motor- refers to the use of small muscle groups such as those used for threading beads.

A separate section has been added for infancy from birth to one year. Infancy, as defined in this book, is a major period of development in which the three broad areas of development are not easily distinguishable. Although each of the three areas of development are mentioned separately, it should be understood that all areas of develpment occur at the same time are interelated throughout a child's growth and development.

Each activities lists an age range in which the child should be able to successfully complete the activity with the only minimal adult assistance. A child's ability to do a

given activity develops from year to year. Hence a four- to five-year old should be able to sing and march independently in a group activity. A three-year old may also participate, but may need adult assistance to remember the songs or keep the rhythm as well as the four-year old.

If a child cannot perform several of the activities at the given age range, this would indicate a probability of delayed development. Avoid attaching lables of fast or slow to children. If you suspect delayed development in one or more of the developmental areas, consult a competent professional. Meanwhile, work with the child at his or her own level until the child is capable of progressing to more advanced levels of development.

Stimulation activities should be scheduled into a regular routine. This will make managing the children much easier because they will know what to expect and when.

If, for example, music is held at a set time every day, children will tend to gather together every day at the appropriate time. If musical instruments, such as drums and shakers, are kept in a regular spot, the children will learn to get and put away things without having to be told.

Stimulation aids should be made on a regular basis to replace toys that have been pulled apart by inquistive youngsters. Staff at a day care center can make aids during children's nap-time. Monthly parents meetings can be used to make aids as well as a forum for group discussion relevant to

parent education. Making aids with parents reinforces the importance of play in a child's growth and development.

In conclusion, stimulation activities carried out within an atmosphere of love and attention in the home and in the day care center will help a child grow mentally and physically. All areas of a child's growth should be stimulated.

This includes cognitive, gross motor and fine motor. the goal of working with children should be to produce children who are sure of their own capability and eager to explore their enviroment.

With this in mind, a well-planned daily routine of stimulation activities combined with proper nutrition, love and attention will help children grow and develop into mature healthy adults.

Infancy

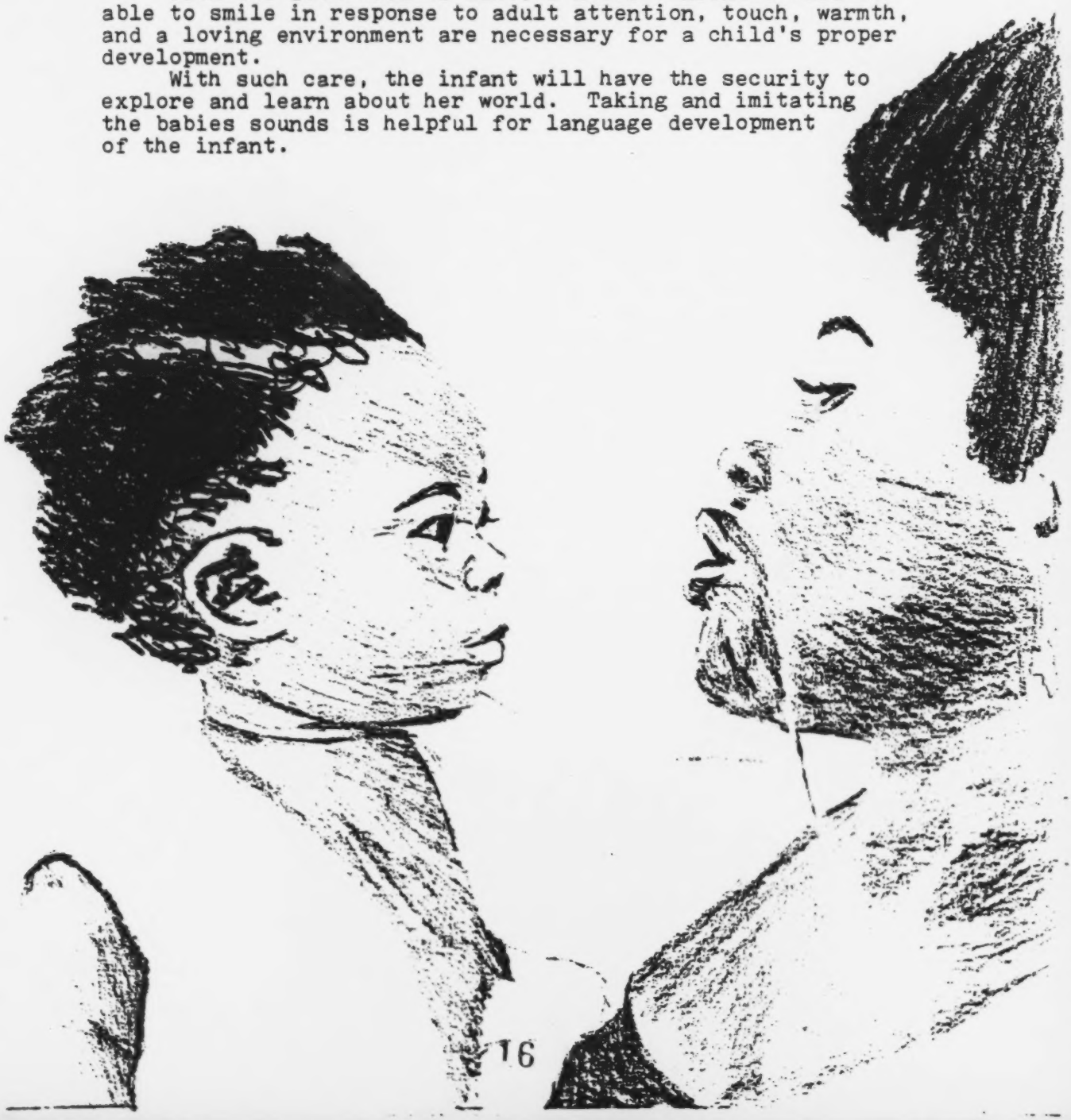
Love and Attention

After the basic needs of food and shelter are met, the most important needs of a child are for love and attention. Love and attention are needed for the social-emotional growth of the child. If stimulation activities are carried out within an atmosphere of love and attention at home and the center, then the child will best be able to grow and develop to his or her fullest potential.

Infant, adult smiling and cuddling

From the 16th week of life, a normal infant should be able to smile in response to adult attention, touch, warmth, and a loving environment are necessary for a child's proper development.

With such care, the infant will have the security to explore and learn about her world. Taking and imitating the babies sounds is helpful for language development of the infant.



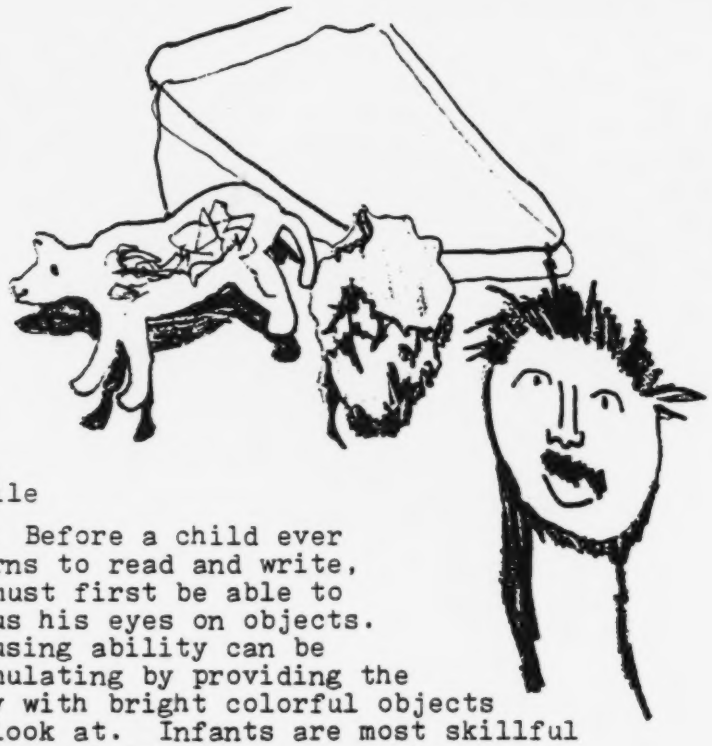
Child hugging a soft toy

The ability to grasp at an object is a reflex that is noticable from birth on. This ability can be stimulated by giving a child soft toys to grasp. The child gets the opportunity to exercise his finger muscles as he squeezes the toy. Note that the staff person in the picture is holding the child. Such touch is very important because it gives a sense of warth and security that is needed for healthy development. By six months most children will reach for a favorite soft toy placed just out of reach.

Teether/ Cotton wheels strung together

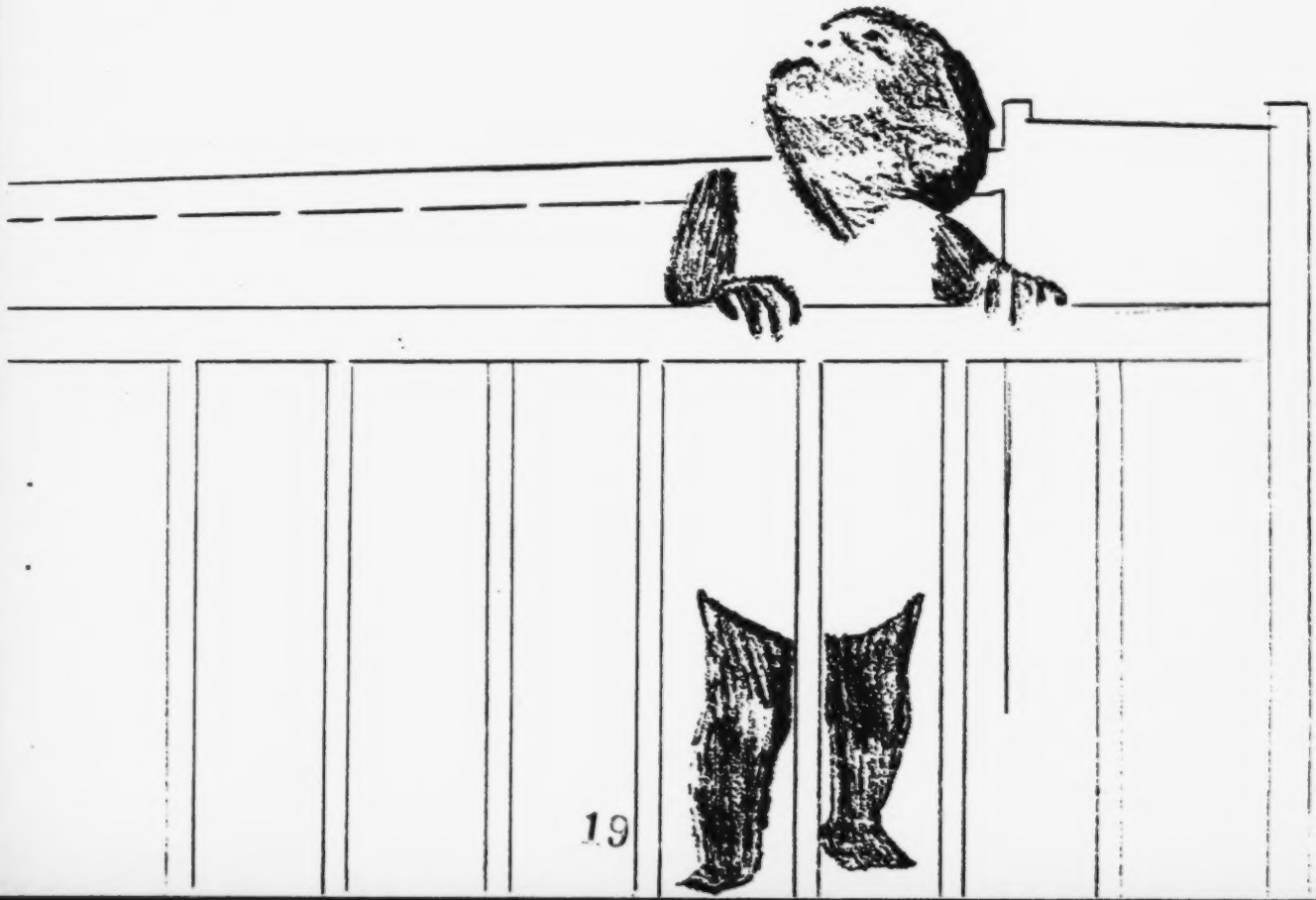
Teether, cotton wheels strung together or a plastic bottle to shake stimulates the child's ability to grasp things and satisfy her natural desire to put in her mouth. For instance, a teether , if not available can be made from cotton wheels strung together. Contary to what some people believe, teething will not hurt the baby's health or cause running belly.

The plastic bottle has pebbles inside of it. When the child shakes the bottle, she hears the sound it makes. This will stimulate her auditory perception (ability to hear) as well as her grasping ability. All these toys stimulates a child's inborn reflex to suck and grasp things.



Mobile

Before a child ever learns to read and write, he must first be able to focus his eyes on objects. Focusing ability can be stimulating by providing the baby with bright colorful objects to look at. Infants are most skillful at recognizing faces, so it is good to include on the mobile. This mobile stimulates the child by helping him to notice what is in his world.



Staff spoon feeding a baby

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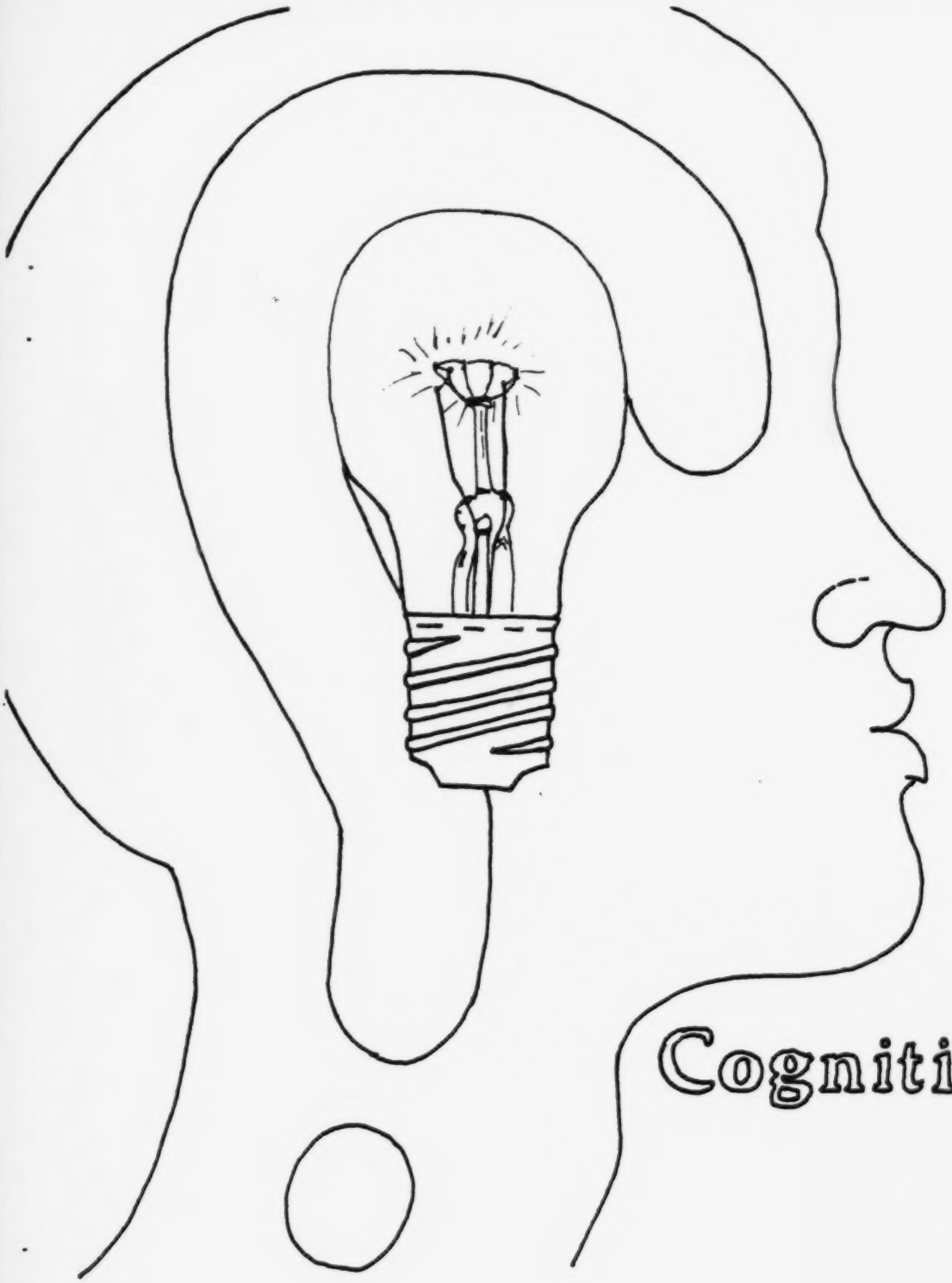
It is helpful to sit next to and at the same level as the infant during feeding time. Do not expect the infant to have adult eating habits and expect some spilling. It is a waste of time to punish an infant for improper eating habits. If the child refuses to be spoon fed, allow her to feed herself with her fingers.

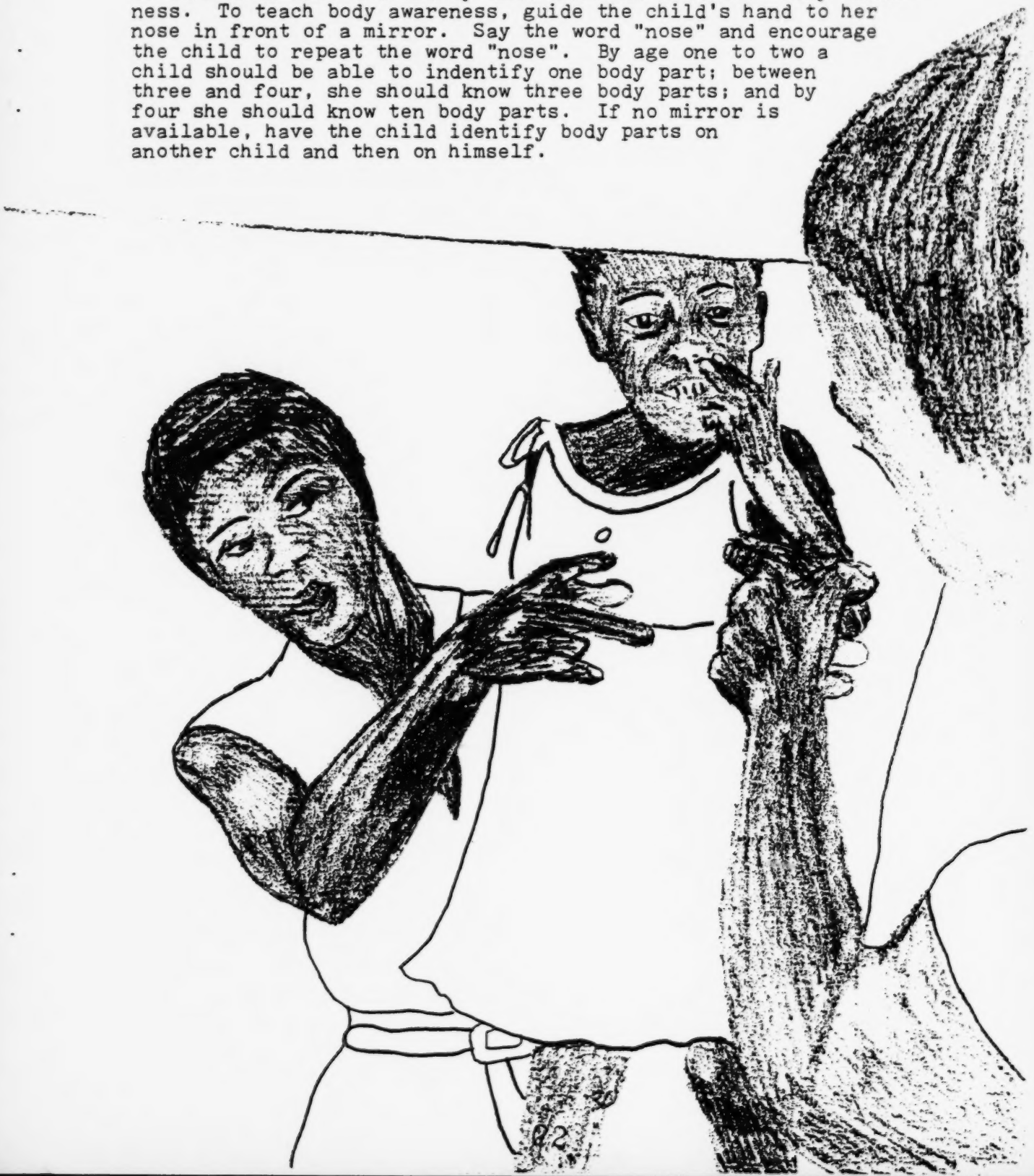
Make sure eating utencils are clean. Spoon feeding babies is more inexpensive and cleaner than bottle feeding. By one year most children are capable of drinking from a cup independently.



Cognitive

Body in mirror

Putting a child in front a mirror increases body awareness by helping her to recognize body parts. Educators have found that children who have good body awareness tend to learn to read with less diffuculty than children with less boby awareness. To teach body awareness, guide the child's hand to her nose in front of a mirror. Say the word "nose" and encourage the child to repeat the word "nose". By age one to two a child should be able to indentify one body part; between three and four, she should know three body parts; and by four she should know ten body parts. If no mirror is available, have the child identify body parts on another child and then on himself.



Picture identification

By identifying pictures, the child expands his knowledge of the world. By showing a child pictures in a book, it will increase the child's love for books. As you show a child a pictures, ask the child simple questions about the pictures. This will stimulate his thinking process and interest in the book.

Picture matching & Shape identification

Recognizing similarities and differences basic to reading and thinking in a intelligent manner. A matching game stimulates the abilty to tell similarities and differences. This game can be played by matching colors or shapes, bottle caps of familar picture, but remember to keep the choices simple. The staff can easily make such a game on cartridge paper or cardboard.

Puzzle

Pre-school children, from age two can be taught to do puzzles of two to three pieces. Doing a puzzle stimulates the child's eye-hand coordination in order to handle the pieces. It also helps him to recognize shapes. Recognizing shapes is necessary for a child to be able to recognize letters and numbers as he grows older. A puzzle can be easily made by cutting up a picture from a magazine.

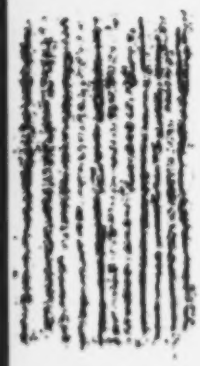
Teaching puzzle

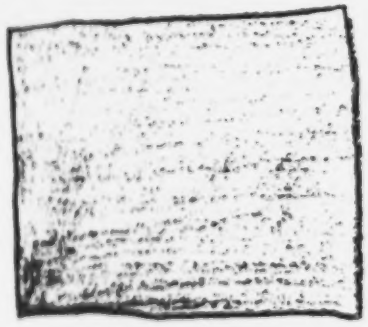
To teach a child to do a puzzle, an adult should praise what the child does right, no matter how small, and guide the child's hand for the parts she cannot do. Eventually the child will master the puzzle.

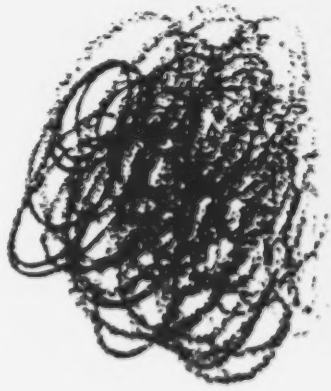
Touch board

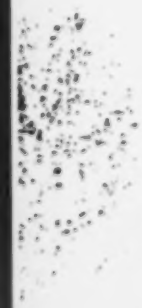
The touch board teaches a child to recognize how things feel in the world around him. It also expands the child's vocabulary. From age two children can be taught words such soft and rough. A child's ability to tell the difference between things is also stimulated.

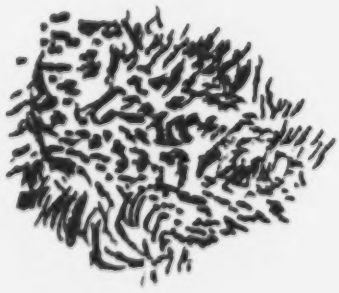
How Do We Feel ?











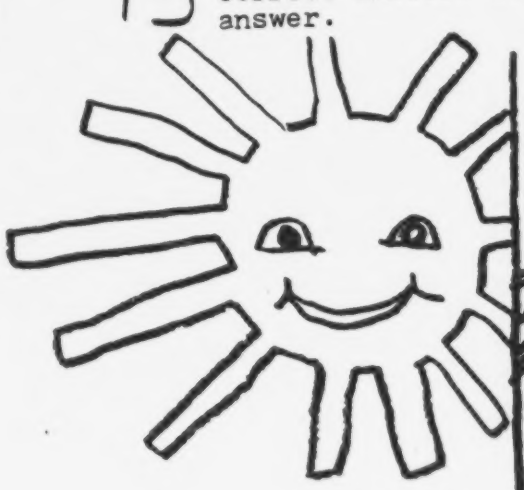
WEATHER CHART

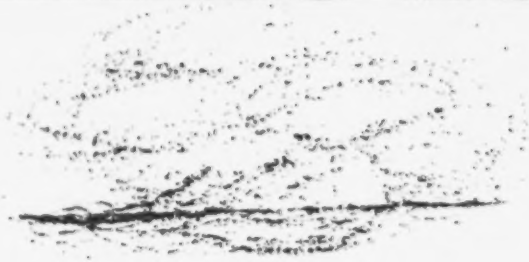
Weather chart

A weather chart is a valuable teaching tool for increasing a child's vocabulary and awareness of the world. Teach this activity by saying,"Today is rainy, sunny, or cloudy." The child should point to the weather condition that the teacher says. If a child is correct, praise her response. If not, go on to the next child. Avoid critizing wrong answers. This will discourage a child's efforts. Make sure you point out correct answers to the child who does not know the answer.

Today is

It is





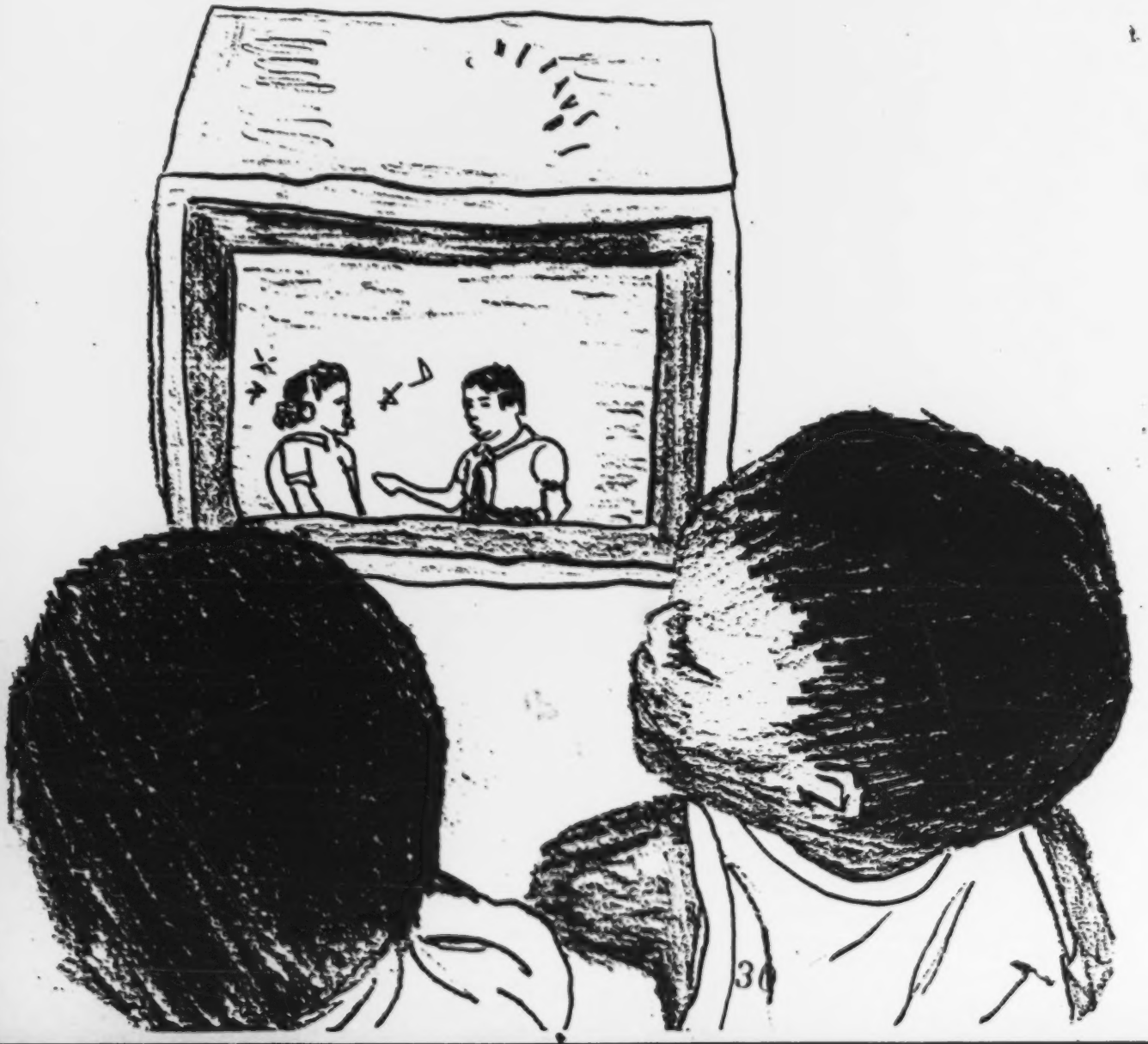
Reading to children

Even though a child cannot read, it is good to read to the child. This will stimulate her vocabulary and interest in books.

Show the child pictures in the book and ask questions about the story as you go along. Since young children have a short attention span, do not continue this activity too long.

Television

A television can be a good learning experience. A child's pretend TV can be constructed from cardboard box with a viewing screen cut out in front. Draw a story, picture by picture on a long paper, wrap the paper around two rollers mounted on the cardboard so the picture on the paper appear in the viewing screen. Allow the child to sit in front of the viewing screen and watch it like a regular TV. This is a great way to tell children's stories.



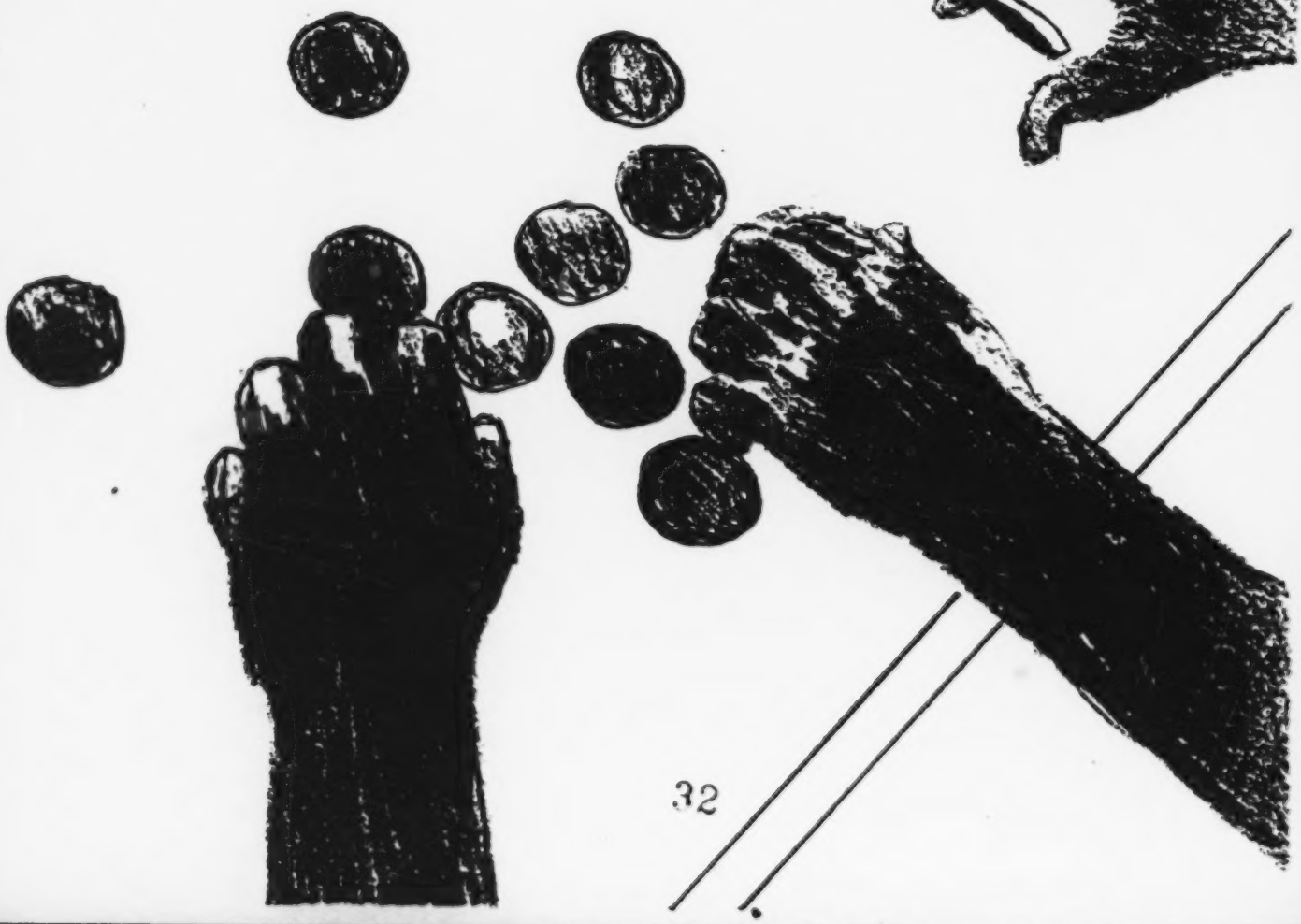
Creative play

Activities such as playing house allows a child to use his creative imagination. Such activities can be centered around puppets, a box used as a house, or even a top to a pot can be used as a car steering wheel for a pretend bus. This is known as pretend or creative play.

Counting

Counting can be taught with bottle caps, blocks, beads, or stone. Pre-schooler between three and four should be able to count to twenty if practiced daily. Between age two and three, a child should be able to count to three in imitation. Do not stress learning to count until a child has learned to identify colors and simple shapes.

PLAYSKOOL



Body identification & awareness

Before a child can judge space on a piece of paper in order to write between the lines, he must be able to judge space around his own body. This is body awareness. One way to teach this is to trace a child's body image on newspaper, then cut it out with a sissors.

Hang the body image on the wall and use it as a stimulation aide to teach body awareness.

Call on the children to identify body parts on themselves and the paper. Probably all the children will want a chance to get their body traced, so use a different child each time you do this activity.

Sound identification

One way to stimulate a child's ability to hear different sounds can be done by using a match box or any small container. Get six match boxes. Fill two with rice, two with beans, and the other two with small pebbles. For instance, the box with beans will make a different sound than the boxes with pebbles. Have the child shake each box to produce a sound, and then match the pair of boxes that produce the same sound. At age three to four a child should be able to match similar sounds. At age two to three a child should name the sounds of familar objects such as a dog barking, and from birth a child should respond by looking or moving his eyes toward a sound such as a bell or a voice.

Children can stimulate their imagination and express inner feeling through puppet play. Often a child can express feelings that he cannot say in real life. In this way an adult can learn much about the child and problems he may have from watching him play. A puppet can easily be made from a plastic bottle covered with frabric and a stuffed sock for a head.

Educational corners

Setting up educational corners allows children to play and learn at their own speed. A corner is an area where stimulation aides are set up for the children using the corners.

Corners can be set up for language, music, home reading or almost anything one can think of. An example of a home corner cotains pretend pots and pans, a pretend stove made from styro-foam or a cardboard box, seats and other things you can find around a home. A musical corner can contain drums, shakers and pictures of musical instruments. Corners should be set up with aides that are safe for children to use. Objects such as sissors should only be used by children under strict supervision form a teacher or adult.

Gross Motor

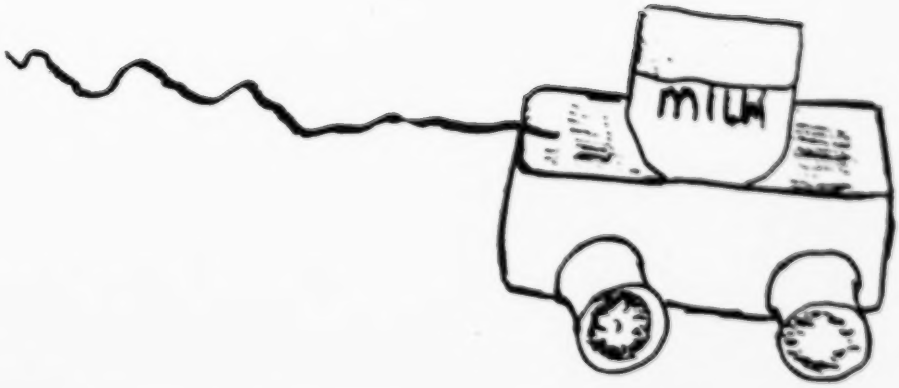
Usually a child crawl before he walks. The child in this picture is crawling after a small rubber tire that was passed him. This encourages a child to exercise his muscle by crawling. Of course the floor should be kept clean and the child should be supervised so that he does not put something dirty in his mouth. Another technique is to dangle a bright colored object so the child crawl after it. Most children begin crawling around seven months, but remember that not all children crawl before they walk.

Helping child to walk

By giving the child opportunity to excercise his legs,you can help the child to walk earlier. Walking increases his range of learning experiences by giving him more territory to explore. The twelve month-old child in the picture suffers from delayed physical development because he has been left in the crib too much at home. Give the cild opportunity to be out of the crib and stimulate his walking by supporting him on his feet.

Truck made from scrap materials

Children love to run around with a truck such as the one in the picture. It can be made easily from scrap materials such as milk cartons and cotton wheels. Since it is inexpensive to make, do not be concerned as a child exercises her natural curiosity to see what it looks and feels like inside by pulling it apart. The truck can be easily replaced.



Roll toys

Roll toys can easily be made with a tin can and wire. Insert the wire into the tin. Use the wire as a handle to pull the tin can along. These toys are very durable; they are good for small children who are apt to pull toys apart. Placing pebbles inside the tin can produces sounds that interest the child in the toys

Toilet training

Before age two most children do not have the necessary muscle development to be toilet trained. To encourage bowel control, praise the child if he asks to use the toilet or lets you know of his need. Learn the time the child usually goes to the bathroom, and place the child on the tiolet at that time.

Praise his efforts if he has a bowel movement. Avoid punishing the child for messing himself as this may delay toilet training.

Putting dish away

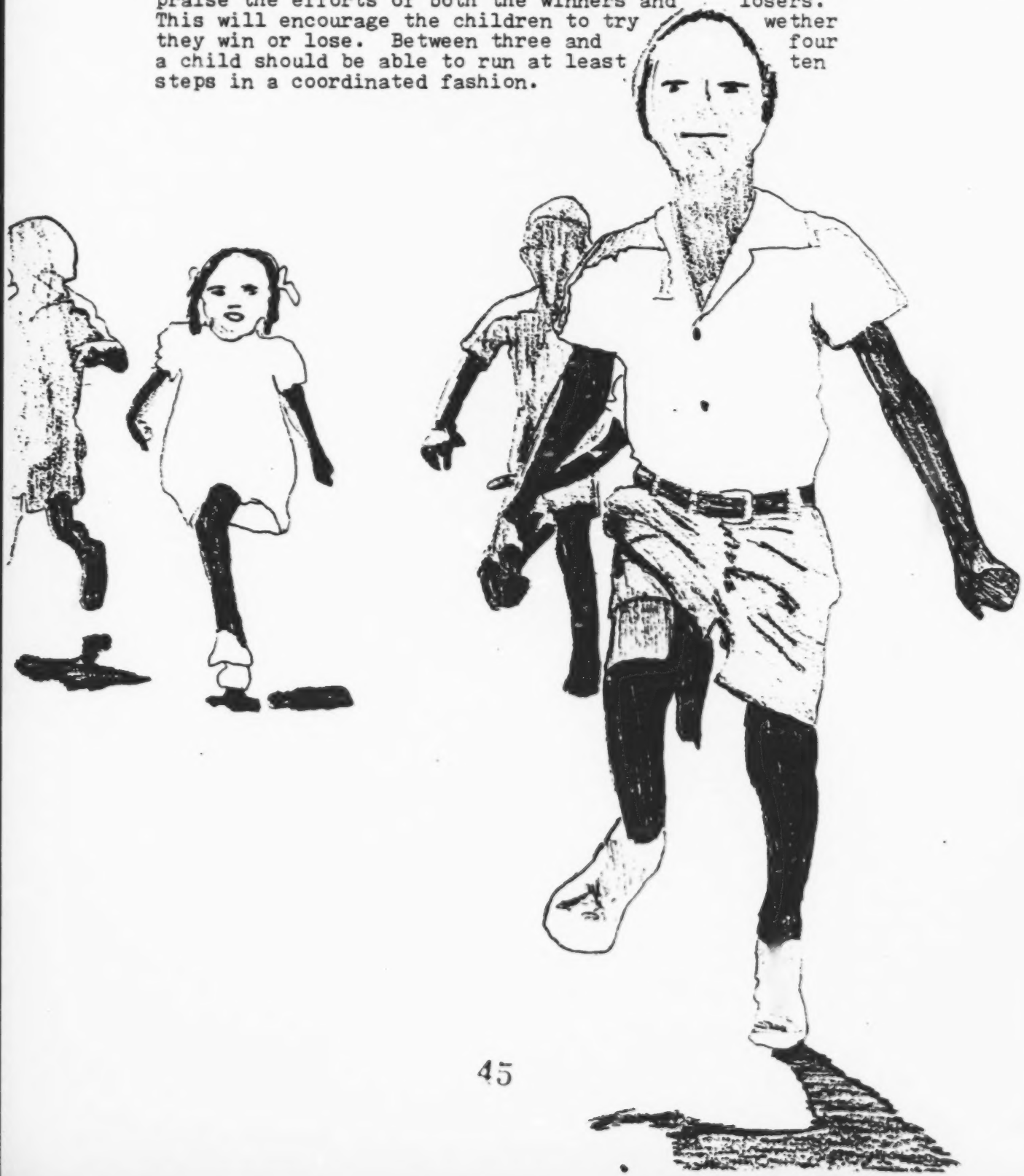
Letting children help out is good for developing self-help skills. Even if it slows you down, allow the children to help sweep or put dishes away. Before a child reaches the age of eighteen months he will usually imitate simple household chores. At age three to four a child should develop other self-help skills such as buttoning large buttons and feeding himself an entire meal. 42

Punching bag

A soft toy can be strung to a tree limb or swing set and used as a punching bag. This is a good way for the children to work out their frustrations and exercise their muscles.

Running a race

Running a race stimulates gross motor development in the legs and back. Adults supervising this activity should praise the efforts of both the winners and losers. This will encourage the children to try wether they win or lose. Between three and four a child should be able to run at least ten steps in a coordinated fashion.



Throwing a ball

Throwing a ball is good exercise and fun to the children. If a child can throw and not catch, praise the throwing ability. Avoid criticizing the children as this will discourage them. By age two a child should be able to throw overhand. Between three and four a child should be able to catch a ball with two hands.

Swinging

Children love the freedom of movement they experience in swinging. It also stimulates their muscle development as they hold the sides of the swing. Of course, this activity must be supervised carefully.

Helping child on Balance beam

Children under four years of age might need help to walk a balance beam. Help the child by supporting his efforts. This activity, walking a balance beam, stimulates the child's sense of balance and coordination. The four year old child inthis picture has no trouble with this activity.

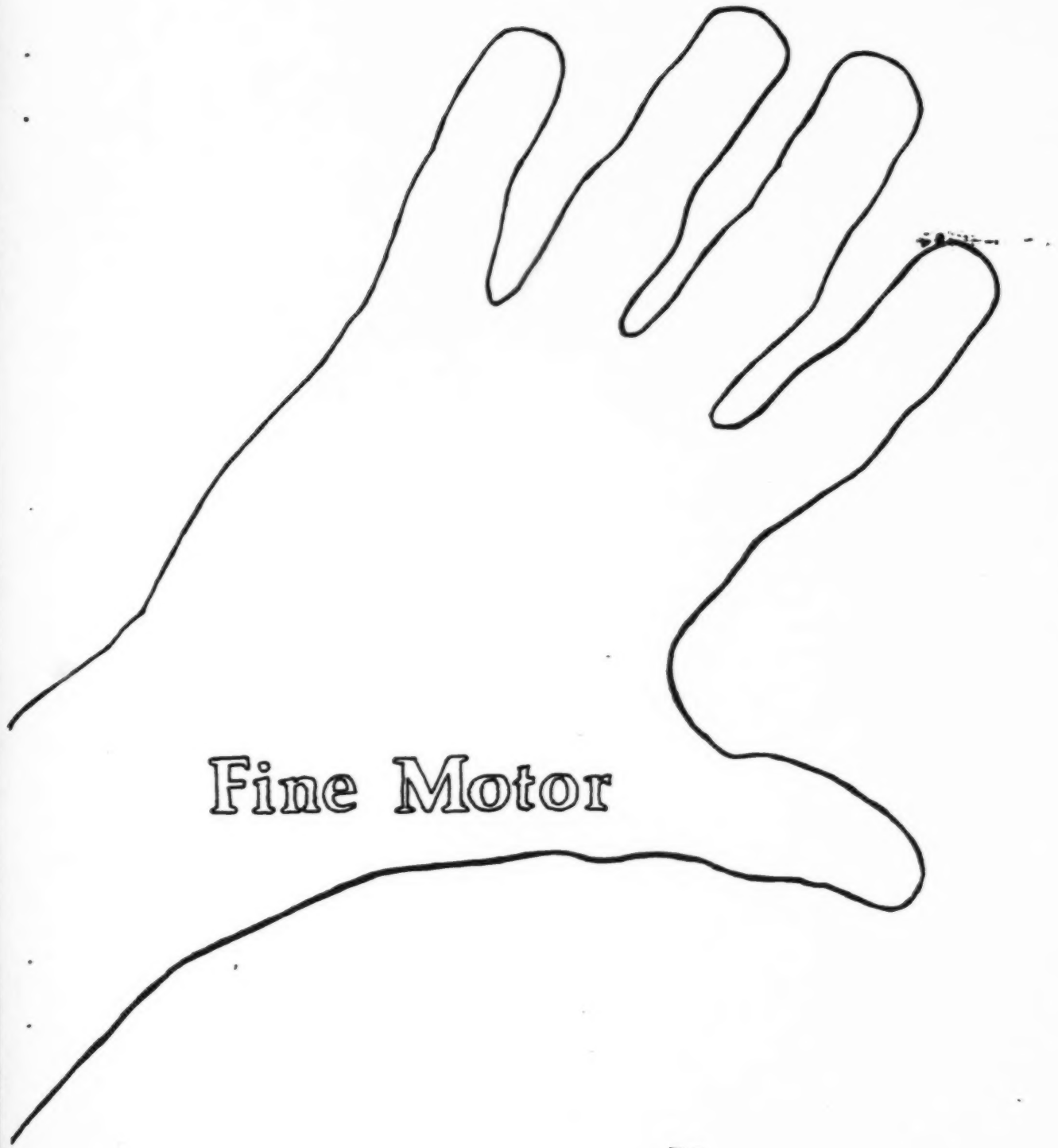
Drumming, singing and marching is helpful for the development of a child. Socially, the child must follow the simple rules of marcing in a circle. They must also try and remember the words or the song. Body awareness is enhanced and sence of rhythm is developed by clapping and drumming. Since children of different ages have different abilities, some children will only march and drum while other children march, drum and sing. A four to five year old child should be able to drum, and march and sing with only minimal adult assistances.

Note how easy it is to make a drum from a tin can. A string can be run through a tin so that the drum can be worn around the neck. Bottle stoppers inside the tin add to the rhythm produced by drumming.

Three children lift a Tire

These four year old children are working together to raise and push the tire. By doing this they get the experience of working together. By age three to four a child should be able to work and play cooperatively with other children his own age needing only minimal adult supervision. Being able to play cooperatively is an example of social maturity.

Old tires are easy to get and stimulate the child's muscle development. Various games can be invented with tires such pushing it at a target or child to child. Another game is to have the children throw a ball into the middle of a tire. If a tree with thick limbs is available a tire can be used as a simple swing. Tires can also be used for jumping and balance.

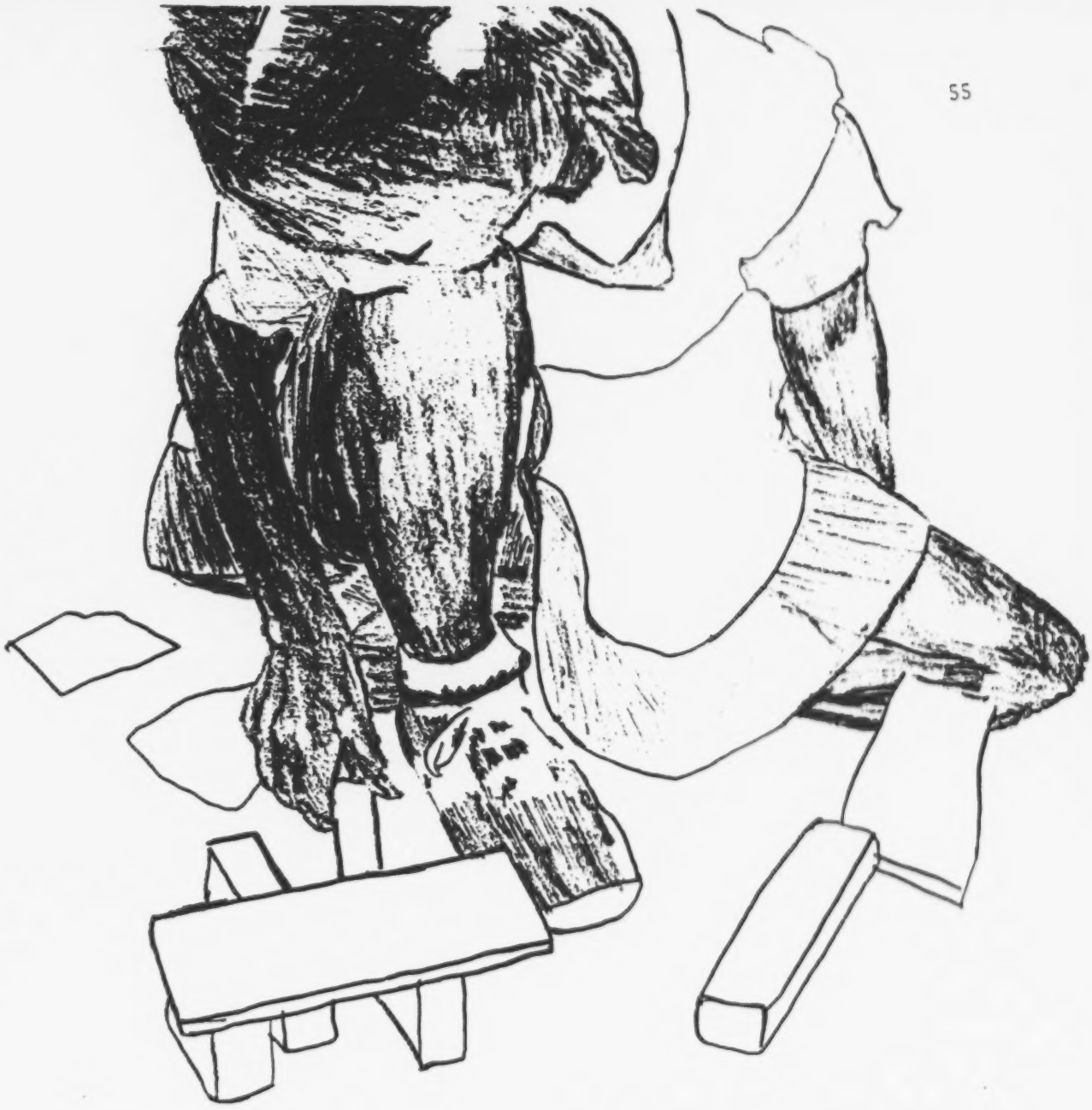

Fine Motor

Independent eating

Independent eating involes eye-hand coordination for the child to get the food to his mouth witha spoon. A child should be able to eat independently with only minor spilling by 18 months. Encourage the child by praising his ability to feed himself. If the child cannot feed himself, guide his hand to his mouth with your hand and praise for his effort. If the child wants to finger feed himself, allow him to do this.

Zipper

This child is learning the basic self-help skill of zipping. By 18 months, children should be able to zip their own clothes if the zipper is started by an adult. To teach this skill, guide the child's hand in yours. Praise her effort. Snaps and buttons are also good activities for the child's fine motor development and self-help skills.



Blocks

Normally developing children of seven months should be able to pass blocks fromm hand to hand. By ten months a child should be able to grasp a small block between his thumb and fore-finger. By eighteen months a child should be able to stack three blocks. Blocks can be had inexpensively by cutting them from scrapwood. Blocks provide fun for the children and stimulate fine motor coordination neccassary for future activities such as writing and independent eating. It can alsc be used to teach such concepts as near, far, under, and above. Blocks are one of the most valuable play toys.

Sand play

Sand play stimulates a child's eye-hand coordination and his ability to pour from one container to another. At age two to three a child should be able to pour a large container to a smaller one. The basic principles of mathematics can also be learned such as one big container can fill two smaller containers.

Water play

Water play serves a similar purpose to that of sand play, developing eye-hand coordination and the ability to pour from one container to another. Many parents fear water play will give their child a cold. This is not true. Two children can walk in the rain and only one catches a cold. This is because a child who gets wet catches a cold only if he has germs predisposing him to catch a cold.

Homemade playdough

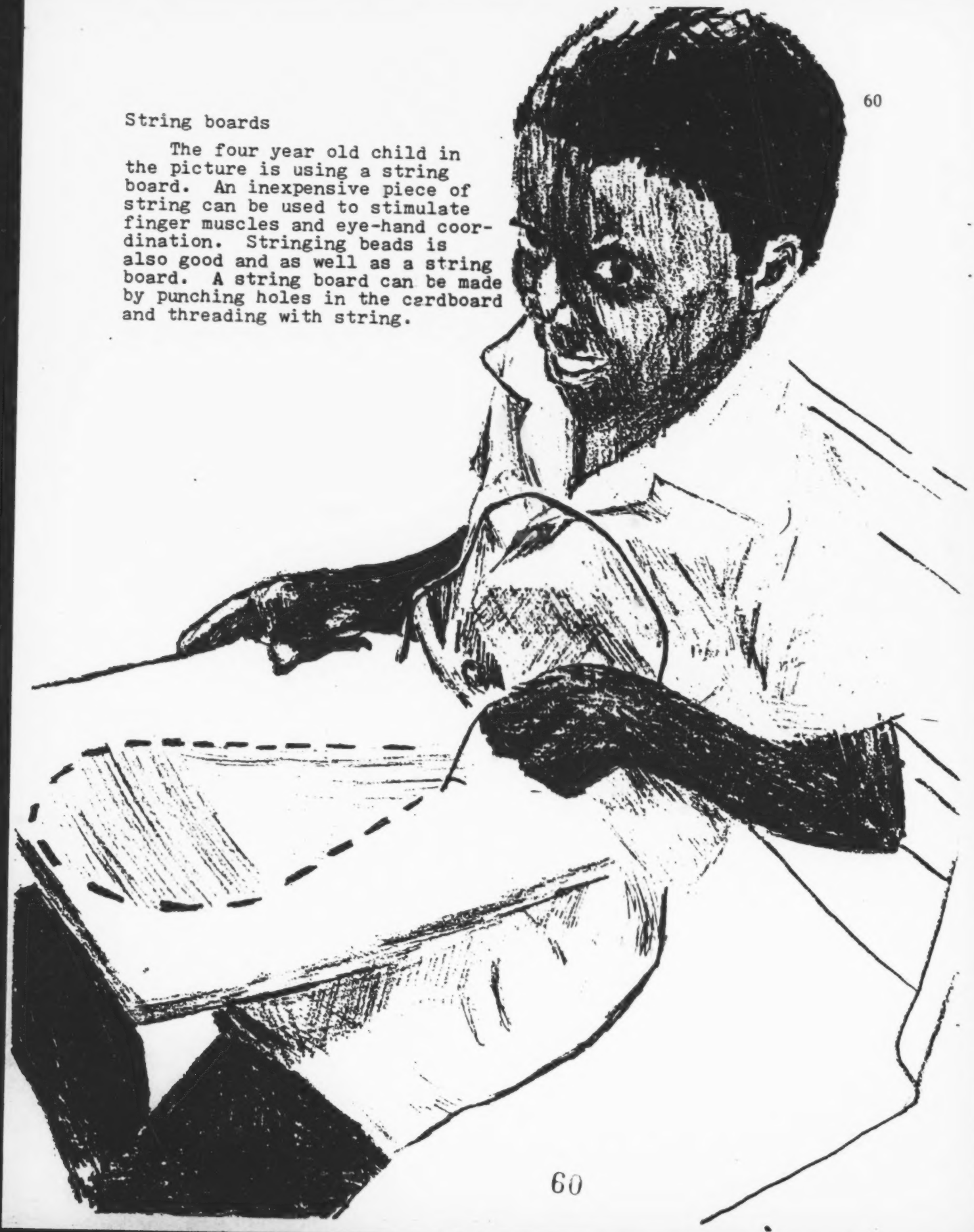
Playdough exercise a child's finger muscles. Playdough can easily be made from flour, water, and salt. This is inexpensive alternative to bought plasticene or playdough. Between two and three a child should be able to roll simple balls from playdough. A child between four and five should be able to make simple shapes such as circle, squares and triangle.

Drawing

Drawing is a fine motor skill that can teach a child the basics of hclding a pen. The staff should not be critical of a child during this activity. Most children will only scribble, but this is a necessary first step to learning to write. Teach the child colors by allowing her to use different color crayons. Praise the child for things such as holding the crayon correctly or being able to draw a shape. If neccessary, guide the child's hand with your hand to enable her to scribble. From age two, a child should be able to scribble. By age three, most children can draw a circle in imitation.

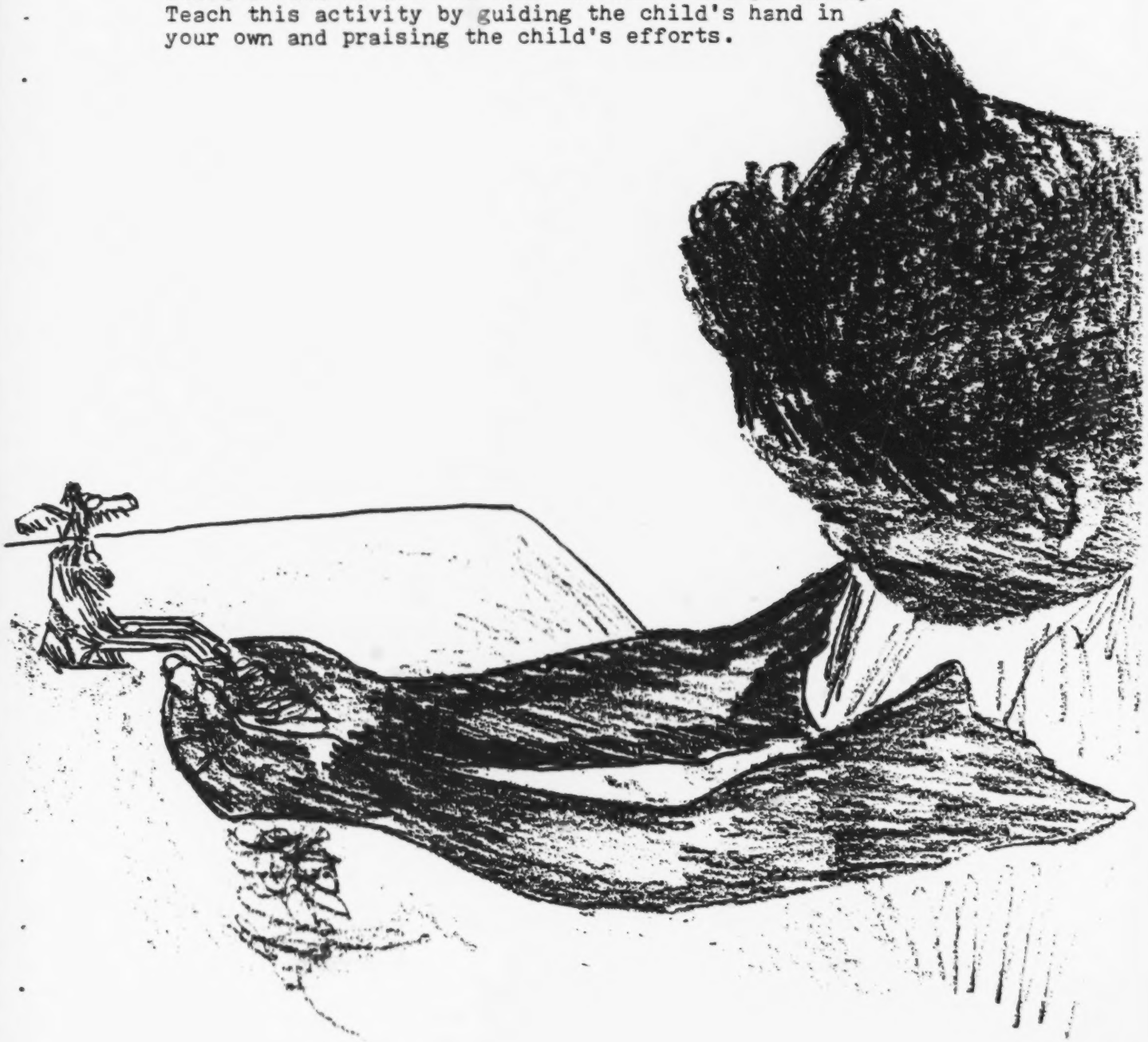
String boards

The four year old child in the picture is using a string board. An inexpensive piece of string can be used to stimulate finger muscles and eye-hand coordination. Stringing beads is also good and as well as a string board. A string board can be made by punching holes in the cardboard and threading with string.



Washing hands

In this picture, the child has been taught a song called "It's time to wash your hands". This makes washing hands more fun and enhances language development and a sense of rhythm. By age three a child should be able to wash her hands independently. Teach this activity by guiding the child's hand in your own and praising the child's efforts.



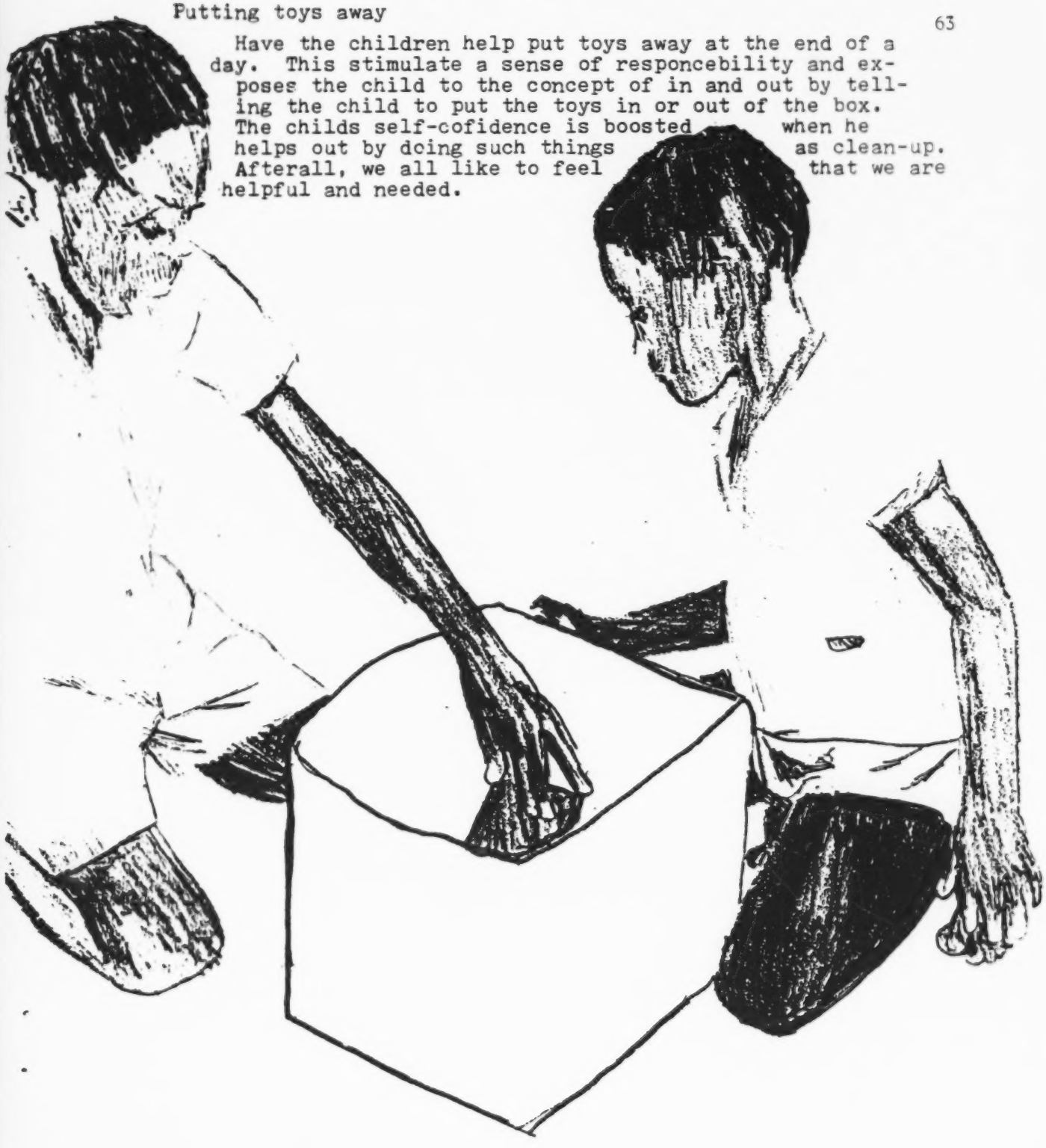
In-Out game

The three year old in the picture is learning to place peg in the holes according to the size of the hole and peg. Since the holes are of various sizes, the child must use judgement of size.

Such an activity can be used to stimulate language development using words such as in, out, big and small. When the child puts the peg in the hole correctly, say the word "in" and praise the child by saying "good job". Guide a child' s hand with your own is she cannot do this. Avoid critizing failure. Toys, known as masking toys , can be made by cutting a plastic bottle in half. The bottoms are usually bigger than the top of the bottle. This makes it possible to fit the top piece in the bottom of the plastic bottle. Nuts and bolts and Jack-in-the-boxes ar also good for teaching "in"and "out".

Putting toys away

Have the children help put toys away at the end of a day. This stimulate a sense of responcebility and exposes the child to the concept of in and out by telling the child to put the toys in or out of the box. The childs self-cofidence is boosted when he helps out by doing such things as clean-up. Afterall, we all like to feel that we are helpful and needed.



Cardboard shoe for lacing

This stimulation aide will help the child develop fine motor coordination necessary for tieing shoes and other activities that involve finger coordination. By age four, a normally developing child should be able to tie shoes independently. As you can see this aide can be made easily and cheaply.

Scissors

Although the child in the picture is unable to handle the scissors in one hand, he does an adequate job by using two hands.

He also cannot cut in a straight line, but encouragement from the staff will help him to do this eventually. This activity stimulates eye-hand coordination necessary for writing and other related activities. If a child cannot cut on his own by age three, guide his hands with your own and praise his efforts. Carefully supervise this activity.

Printing shapes

A good art activity is to print shapes with paints. Do this by tieing a piece of foam to an empty cotton wheel with thin wire. Cut the foam into shaped such as square, triangle, or circle. Dip foam into paint, than stamp the foam onto paper using the cotton wheel as a handle. This activity allows the child to exercise his muscles while learning about color and shapes.

GPO 905-683

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